

LGC Member Outreach Survey Provides Valuable Feedback

By Mark J. Halloran

Ninety-eight percent of respondents to a recent LGC survey rate their New Hampshire Local Government Center (LGC)/New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) membership as valuable or highly valuable and are satisfied or very satisfied with LGC/NHMA programs and services. Those gratifying results are from the *Member Outreach Survey* which LGC's Board of Directors initiated and staff e-mailed out this past July to 1,033 LGC member and affiliate group representatives.

The survey's goal was to gain helpful insights from the people LGC serves about their perceptions of the member-driven organization, plus its programs and services, in order to better serve you. The results are largely positive and offer LGC's staff and board members useful insights for future planning that will be incorporated as part of the organization's new strategic plan of operation.

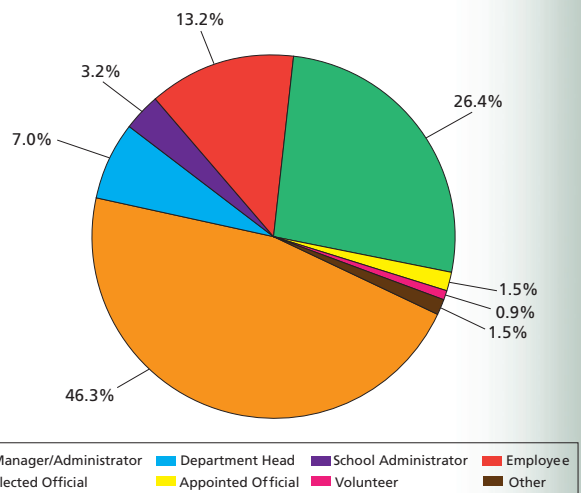
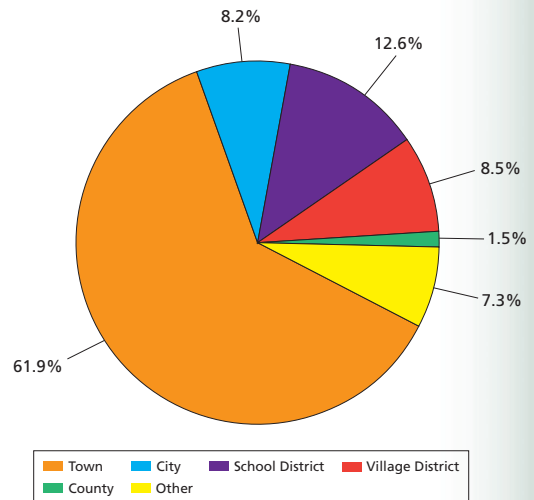
Engaging Our Membership

The *Member Outreach Survey* was conducted as an important step in LGC's ongoing management and operations study undertaken by its board, with the help of outside consultants, about a year ago.

The survey was sent out in three separate e-mail campaigns during July–August and yielded an impressive 33 percent response rate. Respondents included municipal managers and other employees plus elected/appointed officials, school administrators and member/affiliate group representatives. Of those survey respondents, 70 percent were from towns and cities; another 13 percent were from school districts.

Nearly half (46 percent) of the survey's participants have been involved with either LGC or its close affiliate, the NHMA, for more than a decade while 63 percent have been active in local government for a similar amount of time.

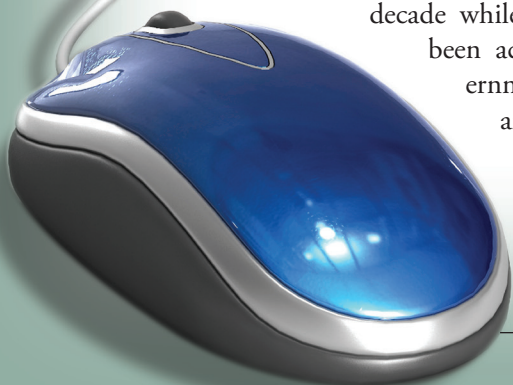
ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS



Key Survey Findings

We've also learned that members view the following as the most important offerings provided by LGC and/or NHMA and regard them as the most effective methods for helping local governments deal with pressing challenges over the next five years:

- Coverage programs
- Advocacy
- Legal services
- Training
- Education



In addition, the following survey results validate the value of LGC/NHMA to members:

- 93 percent of respondents feel LGC/NHMA represents their perspective and meets their needs.
- 93 percent say they get a timely or helpful response from LGC/NHMA whenever they have a problem or need information.
- 92 percent say connecting with LGC/NHMA on issues that matter is very easy.

Still, there is work ahead to effectively deal with the revelation that 76 percent of the survey's respondents find the organizational and financial distinctions between LGC and NHMA confusing and feel clarification is needed.

Programs and Communication

Survey feedback shows there is a notable discrepancy when it comes to member awareness of certain LGC/NHMA programs and services. For example, 67 percent of respondents are very satisfied or satisfied with LGC's Annual Conference, which offers members more than 60 educational and informational sessions each November. However, 75 percent of respondents have either never taken LGC Academy courses or feel they are not relevant to their jobs. Watch for enhanced communications as LGC steps up promotion of the Academy's comprehensive educational offerings—particularly its self-guided online courses—which cover the areas of finance, governance, health/safety, human resources and schools.

Speaking of communications, survey respondents were asked to rate their assessment of all LGC communication tools—from its website and this magazine to worksite visits and paper mailings. Nearly 90 percent of respondents say they remain satisfied or very satisfied with paper mail (e.g., brochures, letters and flyers) for receiving LGC/NHMA information. At the same time, respondents expressed similar levels of satisfaction with LGC's e-mail communication (95 percent) and website (94 percent). This is a welcome trend as LGC migrates toward using more e-communications. It not only saves on mailing costs but assures timely delivery of information that's securely protected when of a personal nature.

The member survey also delved down to probe levels of satisfaction with LGC's coverage programs: HealthTrust, Property-Liability Trust, Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Compensation. We heard a clear concern about the rising cost of healthcare coverage. Still, 70 percent of respondents feel LGC's risk management and coverage programs have helped their local governments save money.

The Next Steps

It was no surprise that the top three issues survey participants feel will be the most pressing to deal with in the next five years all deal with cost:

- Financing local government (39 percent)
- Containing costs of employee benefits (28 percent)
- Dealing with state tax structure, cost shifting/reduced state funds to local government, and state mandates (28 percent)

Please know that LGC's Board of Directors, which is comprised of municipal, school, county and employee representatives, is now closely considering all survey feedback as the organization's new strategic plan is finalized to effectively deal with the difficult challenges New Hampshire's public sector faces today. We are exploring improved municipal advocacy activities on your behalf and ways to keep you better informed about those efforts. We will continue to implement more coverage options while finding ways to reduce administrative costs. And we will develop more innovative workshops—including a new web-based series—with better communications to keep your employees educated.

The member survey was an important first step, and heartfelt thanks are extended to all who participated. But ongoing feedback is needed and welcomed. Please contact LGC's Director of Communications Eleanor Baron at 800.852.3358, ext. 137, whenever you have a concern about, or suggestion for, LGC.

At the forefront of LGC's planning for the future is its unwavering commitment to being a member-driven organization. Both LGC's board and staff pledge to collaborate with members in developing ideas and solutions that strengthen local government. And that is a promise you can believe in.

Mark J. Halloran is superintendent of SAU #48. He also serves as chair of New Hampshire Local Government Center's Board of Directors. For more information on LGC's Member Outreach Survey, visit the LGC website at www.nhlgc.org or contact LGC's Director of Communications Eleanor Baron at ebaron@nhlgc.org.

2010 Member Outreach Survey – Respondent Comments

“LGC can be much more proactive in providing assistance to small communities in how to better manage operations.”

“Continue to advocate at the statehouse for towns.”

“Surveys are great! Ask us for our input.”

“Continue to communicate and provide services at a reasonable cost.”

“Be creative in health insurance design to reduce costs.”

“I depend on LGC/NHMA to help me keep the town in compliance.”

“Hold a quarterly meet-your-board event in various locations to hear from people directly.”